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SUBJECT: PAS Amman Conducts Web Dialogue

¶1. PAS Amman hosted February 17 a web dialogue on the Embassy's public website between USAID Jordan Mission Director Anne Aarnes and the Jordanian public. This is the first of what are planned as monthly web dialogue sessions with senior country team members. The web dialogue enabled Jordanians, mainly youth, to ask Embassy officers directly about aspects of our bilateral relations - foreign policy, aid, MEPI and other subjects - in which they have direct interest. Besides providing the U.S. view, this program highlights our commitment to dialogue with the ordinary Jordanian. A link to the dialogue can be found on the top right hand corner of the Embassy's homepage at: <http://jordan.usembassy.gov>

¶2. The monthly web dialogue is modeled on the daily "ask the whitehouse" feature on whitehouse.gov website. Our idea is to give individual senior country team members greater access to the public and to build viewership of Embassy Amman's public website. We plan similar sessions with the Consul General, PAO, ECON Counselor and FCS officer in coming months.

¶3. We advertised this initial discussion for about two weeks prior to the event, receiving numerous questions through our webserver and in emails sent directly to the Embassy webmaster. The dialogue was conducted in English, although we invited questions in Arabic, which were translated with an Arabic language response going directly to the sender (note: Embassy Amman's website is almost 100 percent bilingual Arabic-English. End Note.) The dialogue enabled us to reach a unique audience about US assistance programs in Jordan and to address in some detail a number of specific USAID programs, including those targeting the water, health, education, IT and youth sectors, in addition to democracy-promotion and USAID's economic opportunities portfolio.

¶3. PAS Amman had earlier experimented with this idea in a discussion session conducted with two Amman-area high schools in the days prior to the November Presidential Election. That event elicited an extremely positive response. We intend to augment our monthly web dialogues described above with individual, real-time scheduled discussions with high school and university groups.

¶4. PAS Amman's public website is hosted locally and runs on a locally-developed Content Management System. Among the features of this CMS are discussion forums and real-time dialogues of which we plan to make increasing use as the Embassy expands its internet outreach to the Jordanian public.

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